



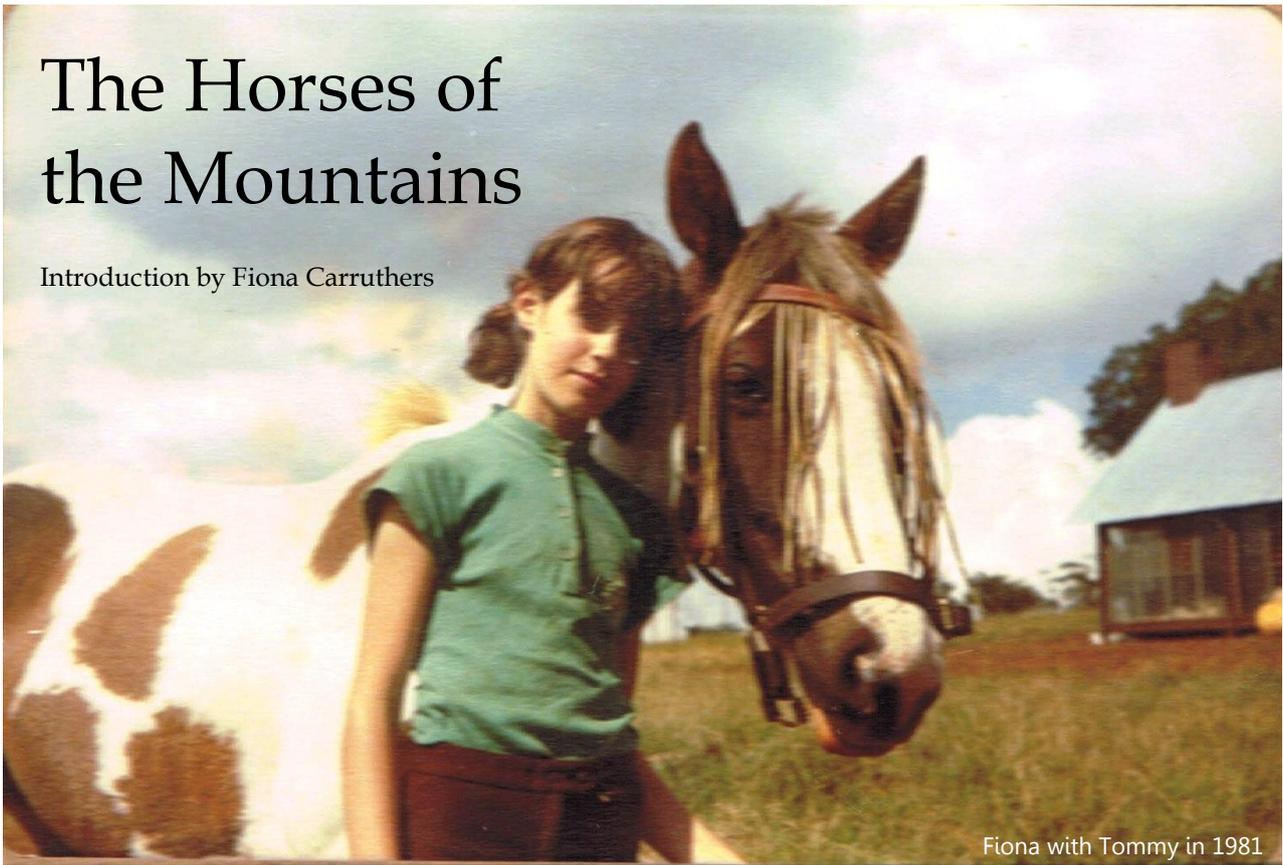
# Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society

Newsletter N° 23

February 2011

## The Horses of the Mountains

Introduction by Fiona Carruthers



Fiona with Tommy in 1981

Horses loom large among my earliest mountain memories as a small child in the mid-1970s when Mum and Dad bought acreage off Danes Way, Mt Irvine. At that time the horse was passing from fashion as popular everyday beast of burden to discretionary leisure item and, even way back then, many of the horses I encountered had outlived their used by date and were killing time hanging around in paddocks with no real purpose. Nevertheless it was a blessing to arrive on a mountain populated by so many superb horsemen and women. In 1979 Alan and Elly Gunn were good enough to bequeath me the indomitable Duster and, under the eagle eyes of the Gunns, the Scriveners and Noellie McLean, my brother Ash and I received valuable lessons in bush horsemanship from those now all too rare beings who'd lived and breathed horses since before they could walk.

– continued on page 9



## The President's Report

Welcome to the Society's first *Newsletter* for 2011. The Society's Annual General Meeting for 2010 was held on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November in the Village Hall and we combined the proceedings of that with our Community History Day. There was a good attendance for both of these events, with friends, members and neighbours enjoying an exhibition of the Society's magnificent archival material. This included maps, photographs, books and a variety of other documents.

At our first meeting for the year the incoming Management Committee was confirmed as follows: President (Des Barrett); Vice President (Darrell Conybeare); Secretary (shared among Committee until filled permanently); Treasurer (Tim Gow); Research and Public Officer (Mary Reynolds); Archivist (Kathleen Oakes); Museum Curators (Zaharah and John Braybrooke); Newsletter Co-ordinator (Florence Smart);

Minute Secretary (Alice Simpson). I thank those members who put their names forward and who were elected to the Committee and I especially welcome new members Zaharah, John, Tim and Alice. I also wish to record my appreciation for the work undertaken by Kathy Harrington and Anne Mayall, who retired from the Committee at the 2010 AGM. A more detailed appraisal of their work for the Society was contained in my last AGM report.

## The Website

The Society, along with the Progress Association and the Rural Fire Brigade, has been fully involved in the development of the Mt Wilson website by providing Tim Gow, the Society's web co-ordinator, with a range of historical information and archival documents for the design and content of the public face of the site. It has been an interesting process, learning as we go, with the aim of making information about the Society, its archives, the Turkish Bath Museum, and our aims and objectives available to a potentially huge audience both within Australia and internationally. This is a significant shift for the Society in terms of publicity. Check it out at [www.mtwilson.com.au](http://www.mtwilson.com.au).

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**Have you always secretly dreamed  
of producing a newsletter?**

**Now's your big chance!**

**The Society's newsletter editor has  
decided to dedicate all her time to  
growing garlic and rhubarb,  
learning the banjo and attending  
circus festivals. The job will be  
available from the end of this year.**

**If you're interested, contact Florence Smart at  
[westring@bigpond.com](mailto:westring@bigpond.com) OR (02) 9416 1957.**

## Photographic Archive Scanning

One of the first tasks to be addressed this year will be the scanning and disk storage of the Society's large photographic collection. We'll adopt a procedure whereby a manageable batch of photographs will be scanned and captioned, allowing us to get a feel for the process, and then reviewing the quality of the finished product as we proceed. Eventually the Society will have digitally stored and captioned its entire collection of photographs and, as you would appreciate, this will be of great assistance to anyone who wishes to access our collection for their research. It's impossible to put a completion date on this project (it might take a couple of years!); however, we've made a start and I will follow this project closely and keep members informed through the *Newsletter*.

I look forward to another busy year for our Society and I trust there is much for you to enjoy in the following pages.

—Des Barrett, President

## Medal of the Order of Australia

The Society offers its warmest and heartiest congratulations to Mary Reynolds, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of



Australia on 26 January 2011. The citation reads: 'For service to the community through a range of historical, environmental and charitable organisations' then a brief summary of the many and varied contributions Mary has made to the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine communities since she and her husband Ellis came to live here in 1986.

Mary was the driving force behind the establishment of a community history group which later became this Society, and has held several executive and ex-officio positions with the Society since the beginning. Her research and documentation of our history is of the highest standard, and is ongoing.

But such dedication to the Society is not the only way in which Mary has continually served her community. For many years she and Ellis undertook the Red Shield Appeal in Mt Wilson. As a founding member of the Bushwalking Group she helped organise the group and wrote and produced the newsletter for many years. Mary coordinates the monthly Friendship Group meetings, has participated in Bush Care until very recently and is always the first to offer help with every community event.

Several local residents have commented that 'we are very lucky to have her', and the Society endorses that view wholeheartedly. In fact, there would be no Historical Society without Mary. We are delighted that her community service has been recognised in this way.

This online Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations newsletter is published five times a year and delivered free of charge to your inbox. It contains excellent news, articles and commentary about heritage issues in our region. To subscribe contact John Leary at [johnnanette@optusnet.com.au](mailto:johnnanette@optusnet.com.au).

## BMACHO AGM

John Leary, President of the Blue Mountains Association of Cultural Heritage Organisations (BMACHO), extends a warm invitation to all to attend their Annual General Meeting on Saturday 19 March 2011 commencing at 2.30pm. The meeting and afternoon tea will be held at Everglades Historic House and Gardens (37 Everglades Avenue, Leura) and those attending are welcome to enjoy the property at their leisure. Of particular interest will be guest speaker Will Holmes á Court, Chief Executive Officer of the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

**HERITAGE**  
 NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION  
 OF CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS INC.  
 JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2011 ISSUE No. 13

### Lithgow's Lidsdale House gardens to be restored

*By Ian Milliss*

One of Paul Sorensen's most resolved but least seen gardens, surrounding Lidsdale House on the Castlereagh Highway at Lidsdale west of Lithgow, is about to undergo a much needed restoration.

The garden was designed by Sorensen shortly after the end of WWII but has been in decline for several decades until its recent purchase by Centennial Coal who are using it as their central western area offices.

In recognition of its significance to the local community they have begun a long term restoration program covering both the house and the garden.

Planted in the 1940s, the garden has suffered from neglect, over maturity and inappropriate ornamentation after passing through a number of private hands since the 1960s.

On completion of building repairs a long term plan to resuscitate and restore the garden will be implemented. It seems right that a garden that grew out of the passion of a coal mine owner should now be restored by a coal mining company.

It was round this time that he was commissioned to design a two acre garden at Lidsdale House by coal mine proprietor Frank Neubeck. Neubeck had also suffered the loss of his eldest son in the RAAF in 1945, a fact which may have drawn

two very different personalities closer together. It was to be Sorensen's largest commission until 1960 when post war recovery really set in.

Neubeck was the grandson of Alois Neubeck, a Bavarian immigrant who had arrived in 1855 with his wife Clara. Settling in Wallerawang he was employed as a blacksmith by James Walker, the landowner who had hosted Charles Darwin during his 1836 visit.

The Neubeck family prospered, purchasing property in the nearby Lidsdale and Blackmans Flat area. Francis (Frank) was born in 1889 and in 1910 took a small mining lease with his brother William where he also operated a sawmill.

These enterprises grew until in 1940 he opened the first black coal open cut in Australia, the Commonwealth Colliery No. 2 at Lidsdale.

*Continued page 3*

*Lidsdale House east terrace*

*Lower garden path at Lidsdale House*

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## The Story of Irvineholme

In 1897 three young friends, Harold Morley, Charles Scrivener and Basil Knight-Brown—all fellow students at Hawkesbury Agricultural College—became the first settlers at Mt Irvine. On 1st July that year they applied successfully to the Government Land Board for approximately 1000 acres on Mt Irvine. During the winter of 1950 Harold Morley wrote a very entertaining and informative account of these early settlers' experiences clearing their land, starting farming and building houses for themselves and their families. This is the second in a series of extracts from 'The Story of Irvineholme'. Harold Morley takes us back to 1897 when the three pioneers travelled on foot to Mt Irvine for the first time.

*During our time [at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College] Mr C. R. Scrivener, a Metropolitan Staff Surveyor at that time, camped on the college while determining a base line for the trigonometrical survey of the State on which he was a prominent officer. His son Chas. P. Scrivener was attending the college at the time. He and B. F. Knight-Brown and I were friends and Mr. C. R. Scrivener spoke to us of taking up land together on an area of rainforest brush land that he knew of. During the June holidays on 20th June 1897 he drove us over Kurrajong Heights to Bilpin, where we left the wagonette and horses with Abe McKeown, a settler and one time Bells Line pilot in the days when the cattle were driven from out West, over the range, through Bell, over to Mt Tomah to Richmond and Sydney.*

*McKeown was an interesting character and one of the old type of bushmen, wonderful blade shearer and fencer, and able to do anything with stock or in the bush. He used to point to his house and buildings, fences etc. and say, "I did it all with these two pairs of hands". His ambition was to build an up-to-date house with up-to-date bathroom in the middle with a door into each bedroom. He at last built the house, and was finishing the bathroom. While the bath was half full of dirty water from scrubbing it, and other things, he went outside to fix the outlet. It was Sunday morning, and the Ashwell boys came over to see Abe, who started one of his endless yarns. He usually interspersed in his yarns, "Well - to cut a long story short" and would then proceed. This morning, after yarning a while, he sat on the ground to be more comfortable and happened to sit right under the bath outlet. Just as he got to the usual "Well, - to cut a long story short", his wife happened to go into the bathroom and pulled out the plug.*

*Poor Abe was doused from his bald head and beautiful full beard down to his boots, much to the joy and amusement of the Ashwell boys.*

*Returning to where we left the wagonette and horses. After sleeping on a tarpaulin on the ground at McKeown's we made up swags of tucker, tools etc. in the morning and made our way across the Bowens Creek Gorge to a cave a few hundred feet up this side, where we made camp in the cave, near a little creek. It was a beautiful June day, and in the afternoon we climbed to the top of the mountain and had a general look around.*

*Next morning we climbed up the mountain again with tools and instruments to run a traverse to find out the area etc. of good land. Nearing the top of the sandstone part, we looked back and saw dense rain clouds driving up from the south. I went back and just got our blankets etc. under shelter and some kindling wood in when it started raining. I rejoined the others and we battled through the dense undergrowth with brush hooks and axes in steady cold rain, taking turns with the chain and when it became too cold taking a turn with axe and brush hook clearing the lines. We stripped all clothes off on returning to the cave each evening and dried them before a big fire in the mouth of the cave. Then warmed up at the fire and to sleep if we could disregard some terrific snoring. This routine continued for seven days of perishing cold and dense rain, until tucker ran out and compasses were waterlogged. We had run the traverse far enough to get some idea of the area. The night before we started back across Bowens Creek, it fined up with a very heavy frost which froze over the creeks and we had to break the ice to wash and get water for tea etc. No rain fell after that for a long time.*

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## Community History Day

Following on from the Society's Annual General Meeting in November 2010 some 40 members and friends stayed on to enjoy lunch together and celebrate the Society's ongoing work. To a continuous display of hundreds of photographs on the big screen, several presentations highlighted the tasks of collecting, cataloguing and preserving a wide variety of valuable documents, images, historic items and books of interest.

Kathleen Oakes described her role as archivist, emphasising how important it is for all community organisations to retain records of their activities and for property holders and gardeners to preserve their history for future generations. John Cardy explained how items are catalogued and organised so that researchers and interested people can find what information they are seeking. Mary Reynolds gave an entertaining and informative overview of how she started researching and recording local history, with several delightful anecdotes thrown in. A summary of Mary's presentation is included below.



Members of the committee had set up a fascinating display of which included memorabilia from the Mt Wilson Public School (including the Punishment Book which recorded 2 extra strokes for 'carelessness'), several albums of historic photos of great interest, old wooden signs carefully conserved and iconic blue singlets of champion axemen.

The Schoolmaster's Cottage and Study Centre were open for inspection, and a number of people were interested in viewing the Society's extensive collection housed in the Study Centre. Both the Schoolhouse and Cottage are available for holiday rental and Margaret Dean was on hand to show people through. Margaret and her husband Stephen manage this popular accommodation.

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## Asking Questions and Giving Answers:

### Mary Reynolds on researching, sorting, filing, writing and dealing with requests

1993 was a pivotal year for my involvement with history and Mt Wilson. In February that year I became involved, along with Jane Smart and other members of the C.W.A., with a farewell function for the Valder Family held in the Village Hall. Huw Evans of Mt

Irvine graciously agreed to be the MC on that important occasion. Those who attended would most probably have many happy memories, and mementoes of the day are now on the walls of the Hall. The C.W.A. had already suggested to me that a history

of the Village Hall should be recorded. Why I was asked is something I cannot really answer. Perhaps others can. Bill Smart assisted me by producing, from the depths of Wynstay, a number of ancient folders containing many documents that shed light on

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that story. I have here with me today the original exercise book in which I began to sort and piece together the numerous documents and scraps of paper and where I began to write. Although I had been a teacher of history for years and knew in theory the significance of original sources when constructing the past, I had very little experience with primary sources. It was my friendship with people like Gwen Silvey at Woodford Academy and the National Trust and those at the Norman Lindsay Gallery at Faulconbridge, where I worked as a volunteer for some time, which created a foundation for me.

In March 1993 the C.W.A. decided, sadly, that it was time to abandon its separate organisation of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine and closed its books. A final gesture was the construction of the stone seat in Wynne Reserve and the farewell, which paid tribute to its life members past and present, was held there. I was already beginning, by that stage, to realise then that the history of our small but robust community was disappearing rapidly and records needed to be retained and preserved. Our Society does, thankfully, have a record of that event and the C.W.A. minute books are in our archives.

Three weeks before the opening of the new Waterfall bridge (named the Charles

Wilkins Jefferson Bridge) in May 1993, the Progress Association asked me to give a talk on Charles Wilkins Jefferson to coincide with the renaming of the reconstructed bridge over Waterfall Creek. I was a little surprised by this request as I was not especially popular with some of the Committee and, furthermore, three weeks is really a very short period of time to undertake basic research. Fortunately my friendship with Meg Fromel and her sister Helen Warliker enabled me to receive first-hand memories of their grandfather, C.W. Jefferson, who was a truly colourful figure in this community for many years after he arrived in 1930. Again that event has been recorded and is in our archives.

As I stated earlier, 1993 was a special year. The Progress Association decided to have an anniversary function in November 1993. It was to be the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the surveying of Mt Wilson by Edward Sandham Wyndham in 1868. Although I was not on the Committee of the Progress Association, I somehow found myself rather deeply involved. It was with the help of many people such as Peter Valder (a mine of information about past residents), the grandson of E.S. Wyndham (surveyor of Mt Wilson), the family of John Bowie Wilson (who Mt Wilson was named after) and so many others that we were able to

gather for that memorable event.

Out of this remarkable exercise came the beginnings of our Society. On the same day Robin and John Leonard arranged a marvellous photographic exhibition in the Village Hall with support from Tom and Tood Kirk, the Blue Mountains Historical Society, the Mann family (originally from Dennarque) and others in the community.

In 1994 the Progress Association recognised that it would be beneficial for a committee to continue the work of the previous year and the Mt Wilson History Group was created. In 1997 it became the core of the Historical Society.

In some strange way our home gradually became the repository for documents, records and photos. More importantly I realised that they had to be sorted and filed. I found myself needing to consult the experts in these matters. Professionals in the museum world were very helpful. I had now also adopted a practice of always carrying an exercise book with me in case I met up with someone who could be questioned about the past.

Dear Betty Clarke was one such a person. What a wonderful memory she had and such memories they were too. All now beautifully recorded in our newsletters.

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Betty made the bricks on which our Village Hall stands. Others open to questioning were Alice and Cecil Kirk. John Low, a good friend from the Blue Mountains Library Local Studies, wanted to interview Cecil out at Dane's Way in Mt Irvine. John had no transport and I provided that on each visit in 1995. John was especially interested in Cecil's music. It gave me the opportunity to chat with Alice Kirk. Her memory was excellent and out of that came the story of *Wildflower Hall*.

Contributions also came from Libby Raines and the Kirks—Tom Kirk's memories were always important—and I am sure most know the story of the Turkish Bath Museum and the debt we owe Jane and Bill Smart. During that time research had to be done by visiting the Mitchell Library, the State Archives at Kingswood and the Australian Archives. Living at Mt Wilson made this a more difficult and time consuming exercise. I also found myself being asked by various organisations—Probus Groups, the Royal Australian Historical Society, Garden Clubs and the Australiana Society to name a few—to speak about the history. From this began the first efforts in putting some stories together and attempting to write history.

During those years we acquired photos plus text from 'The Settlement of Mt Wilson'

(an architectural thesis compiled by H. Fraser, B. James & A. Mack, 1969) through the Mitchell library. We were also able, in time, to obtain copies of documents from the National Archives telling the story of the Mt Wilson Post Office and records from the Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine schools.

I was not the only one undertaking research. People would occasionally come to me with some item of value—especially postcards about Mt Wilson—they had found which were then copied or filed. When we organised the Charles Robert Scrivener Exhibition some research was paid for by a grant; however, Kathy and Ray Harrington also travelled to Canberra for research and Darrel and Leith Conybeare played a similarly vital role.

I have with me today documents from the Parents and Citizens Association of Mt Wilson School. They came to us rather late but have now been hand accessioned, which took over a year. The survival of the school is, amongst other stories, worth reporting.

Requesting a grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society proved to be an invaluable move. Combined with great community support, we were able to finance this land title research. Having visited the land title office a number of times, I knew that it would be impossible for me to

physically track every title in Mt Wilson. The next two years were spent documenting not only the original 62 portions but a number of portions beyond that. Now copies of that work are with the Royal Australian Historical Society and, to my amazement, are listed on the internet.

Research is far more sophisticated now with the aid of the internet, but it is no less time consuming.

Over the years the number of requests has slowly increased as the Society has become established. In those early days I really had to just feel my way along.

Some who have sought information have also been generous in giving to the Society either by donation or providing valuable primary source material such as the Diary of Eccleston Du Faur from the Mitchell Library donated by Irene Wynne and the Gregson Diary from the Mitchell Library donated by Alison Halliday. It was pleasing to see in Andrea Scott Inglis' 2007 publication *Summer in the Hills: The nineteenth-century mountain resort in Australia* that recognition was given to our contribution to the book.

Peter Rickwood of the Blue Mountains Historical Society recently donated a complete record of the rates and ratepayers for Mt Irvine and Mt Wilson from 1919 to 1982.

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This was a task I began a few years ago but was unable to complete. Peter and I have exchanged information quite often and I am most grateful to him for his generous help.

Tania Kirk, a descendant of Bob Kirk, has provided much useful background on the Kirk family as well as receiving help from our records. Today from Newcastle came a request from Father Brian Roach for help with the Merewether family and to visit me!

Apart from the launch of the book *A Passion for Place* in mid-October, requests this last half year have not been frequent. When a request is made, however, this more often than not involves me going to the study centre to collect the relevant material and bringing it home and later returning it. Not always an easy task these days. What would be of considerable assistance is to have the space to undertake this work in close proximity to our archives and records.

Special thanks to Florence and Kathy for all their devoted efforts and to Helen and John Cardy and Kathleen and to Ellis who cannot be here today.

I appeal to anyone who has some time and interest to consider offering their support to the Society by joining the Committee. Meanwhile we hope you find the display stimulating and worthy of your support.

—Mary Reynolds

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## Powerhouse Museum Visit

On Thursday 9th September, members of the Management Committee welcomed Kate Chidlow and James Elwing from the Powerhouse Museum to the Turkish Bath. Kate is a regional services consultant and James is an archivist, paper conservator and book binder. The aim of the visit was for them to offer us advice on the care and display of the Society's collection and museum and to provide information on digitising the photographic collection.

Florence Smart, John Cardy, Mary Reynolds and I met the visitors at a chilly Turkish Bath. Naturally they were impressed with the building and even more impressed when they realised that we were already using dehumidifiers throughout the museum. They noted, however, that we did not collect any information on the environment within the museum. Did we know what was happening with humidity at 3am? Well... no. James produced the solution from his pocket: a data logger. It looks like a whiteboard marker with a USB port on one end. It can be set to record humidity at particular times of the day or week and the information collected can be downloaded to a computer. James also gave advice on displaying information in the basement. We have plans to mount a display there describing the technology of the Turkish Bath, although as yet the process is still not entirely understood.

Then it was on to a much warmer Study Centre to view the archive and photographic collection, and where Helen Cardy had prepared morning tea. Kate has written an article on the scanning of photographs and so we discussed the purchase of an archival quality scanner, where the backup files could be held, who would do the scanning, whether we contract it out and whether or not we could apply for a grant. Digitising the photographs will help preserve our collection, give us backup in case of disaster and, once our website is up and running, allow easier public access. Kate and James also gave us advice on storage of the original photographs and a database to record the holdings.

Kate and James congratulated the Society on our work so far, rating it 'well above average'. The management committee has been left with some new ideas (and expenses) to ponder on so as to better preserve, record and display our community heritage.

Kathleen Oakes  
(adapted with permission from *The Mounts*)

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## Book Review:

### *The Horse in Australia* by Fiona Carruthers

*The Horse in Australia* is a book of 350 pages by Fiona Carruthers of *Nutwood Farm*, Mt Irvine, published by Knopf in 2008. You don't need to be a rider to get particular pleasure from this well written and fascinating account. Although the horse is not native to Australia it is familiar to most everyone and loved by many. The 350 pages are never dull, always informative, and make a really good read.

As the title suggests, the approach is broadly historical. In 1787 the First Fleet called in at South Africa's Cape of Good Hope and took on stock and supplies, including 500 animals of which seven were horses—a stallion, three mares and three 6-month old foals, and perhaps a few more privately purchased by officers along the way. Some hay was loaded to feed the horses as the fleet moved towards Van Diemens Land. But by journey's end the animals were quite out of proper food, half starved and suffering from rough seas. Not a good start for 'the horse in Australia'!

The text is accompanied by photographs both coloured and black-and-white, many of them quite dramatic—buckjumping, polo playing, ploughing, bushranging. At the end of each chapter a set of notes identifies the sources used, usually with quotations and page references. Important books on related themes are carefully listed and acknowledged. For the chapter called *Walers at War* the end note identifies the author's principal source: Sandy Yarwood's *Walers: Australian Horses Abroad*, Melbourne University Press, 1989. The late Sandy Yarwood, formerly Professor of History at Sydney University, was a keen horseman and his characteristic limp was the result of a riding accident.

Each chapter in *The Horse in Australia* gives a rich account of horse-related activity: the horse in war, the Melbourne Cup, picnic races, bush polo, pony clubs, camp drafting, polocrosse, trotting and pacing, to mention only a few. Along with these are many illustrations, which make this a quite absorbing book even to those of us who only see horses in other people's paddocks or on the big screen. A thoroughly good read, *The Horse in Australia* can be recommended with no reservations.

Arthur Delbridge, 2009

*If you wish to purchase a copy and can't find it in the bookstores contact Fiona Carruthers by post at Nutwood Farm, Danes Way, Mt Irvine, NSW, 2786 or by email at [fionacarruthers1@gmail.com](mailto:fionacarruthers1@gmail.com).*

## The Horses of the Mountains

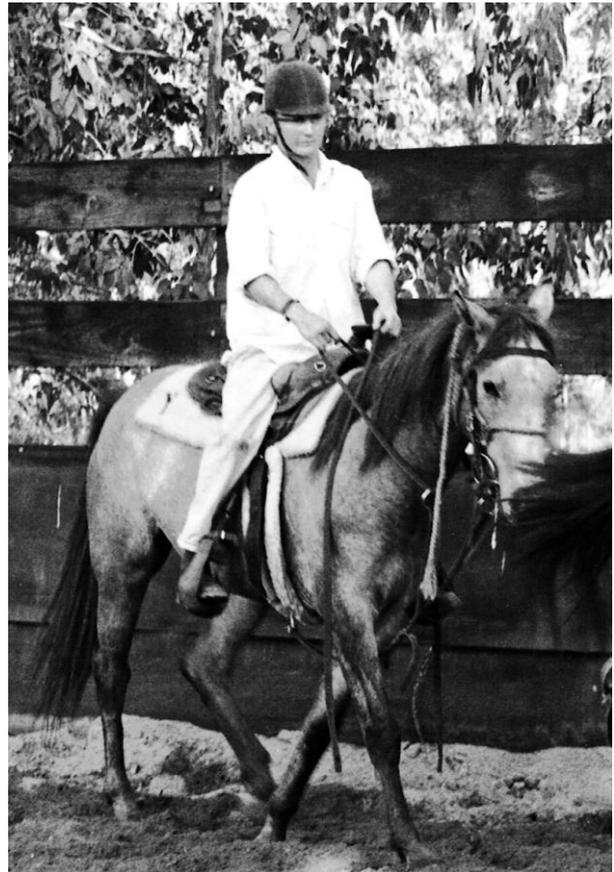
(continued from page 1)

Their teaching methods were not for the faint hearted. They stood no nonsense from either pony or spoilt pony-mad city child, but that never dampened my enthusiasm. I can still picture Bill Scrivener ticking me off one day when the prized possession of my teenage years—Sandy Bay, the magnificent albeit broken down 16.3 hh ex-racehorse—went lame. Standing near the big shed at *Kookatonga*, Bill swiftly diagnosed a nail in the hoof in about two seconds. Nervous that not enough time had been taken with the diagnosis, I asked: 'But do you really think that's the problem?' to which Bill barked: 'I don't bloody *think* it's the problem, I bloody *know*!' I've never dared query a vet since.

During the 1980s, Stewart and David Gunn with Ash and me in tow were a common sight tearing around the mountain on horseback. We discovered endless games including Stewart, aboard his mighty steed Smokey, stopping tourist cars to charge a 20c private road toll for entering Mt Irvine. You should have seen the look of surprise when one perplexed driver asked what on earth this was about and Stewart replied that it was part of a new initiative being trialled by the Blue Mountains City Council. Stewart was years ahead of his time.

While I often glance forlornly at the spot Sandy is buried (next to his best friend, Tom, the skewbald pony), I hadn't thought much about horses on the mountain until I recently read about Waverley in a document penned by Helen Naylor's father, Harold Morley. He was one of the original settlers and the founder of *Irvineholme*, through which we often rode—or more accurately, galloped flat chat. Harold wrote:

*The first horse on the mountain was a mare named Waverley, an old surveyor's horse and so very good as a pack horse. She could judge the exact space her pack would need between trees, rocks etc and if the space was an inch less, she would not budge. She made one mistake when loaded with three bags of chaff, she bumped a tree on the top side, fell off the track and landed against a tree below, quite unable to move until the load was taken off. She was very good in a slide. When she came to a log she would plunge over it then get her heels against the log and heave the slide over. Sometimes she would decide not to pull the slide and would have to be tied up until she would suddenly decide to end the sit down strike and resume work - how human.*



Kathleen Howard Smith on Freya

The detail and affection implicit in the description well conveys how the back breaking task of settling Mountains Wilson and Irvine would have been so much worse, if not impossible, without the brave hardworking horse and bullock teams.



Margaret Gunn (left) and Noellie McLean at Sefton Hall c. 1930s

In that vein, and in the hope of reawakening the spirit of thundering hooves across Silva Plana, I asked a few of our longer term residents to recall some horsey tales. Their stories are dedicated to the memory of two of our finest mountain horsewomen—Kathleen Howard Smith and Noellie McLean—who both passed away in 2009 and are sadly missed.

### *Bill Scrivener, Kookatonga*

I have a photo of my father's Clydesdale team that would have been taken some time between 1920 and 1930 (a bit before my time given I was born in 1925). He was taking timber from my grandfather's timber mill at Mt Irvine to Bell as he regularly used to do, and he'd camp

halfway with the four horses at Water Trough Hill, and then he'd camp at Bell too. They would take the timber in and bring back whatever had been ordered by locals and had arrived at Bell by train. The lead horse was Shock.

I don't know where my father bought his horses. My grandfather was at Hay at that stage, so maybe the horses came from Hay on the railway. The lead horse is usually the most intelligent—does what it's told and the other horses follow. Shock was a good horse and I remember him. The other three horses in the team—Dick, Rose and Barry—I didn't know so well. At one stage, my brother Copeland milked about 20 dairy cows we owned (next door neighbour Knight Brown had the same). After Bowens Creek Road opened in 1934 they took turns taking the cream to Richmond every Monday and Thursday.

Once they got too old, we'd take the horses to the ramparts [the rock cliff below Bowen Lea], euthanize them and they would fall over the edge. Old man Harold Morley did the same as did most of the other locals.

After Shock, Copeland bought Polly, a Clydesdale mare, and she was in foal. He trained up the foal, Mercury, and both those horses pulled ploughs. I did a lot of ploughing in the school holidays when I was home from Hurlstone Agricultural High School. We'd plough to plant corn and rape (now called canola) for the cattle, and my brother would also plant Swede turnips. The apple orchards were ploughed up as well—not a good idea, but they did that in the early days.

I remember well that my Aunt Dora—my father's stepsister—kept a horse and buggy to go into Mt Wilson to visit Marjorie Sloan. The buggy stayed at *Taihoa* for years, but was eventually sold by Gwen and Ed Artlett.

Of course horses were also used just for riding when we found time. My sister Dorothy had Bess, a little Palomino pony. I used to ride her without saddle or bridle to round up the cows in the evening. She was very quiet, but if you weren't careful she'd kick you, and if she couldn't kick you, she'd bite. I kept away from her heels, but she got me from time to time. Bess had a foal and it was called Quickstep, which my other sister Gwen often rode. Quickstep was a bit bigger than his mother and both he and Bess always went to the Mt Wilson Sports on New Year's Day. Dot and Gwen also used to ride to Lithgow Show with their horses, camp there, then ride on to Rydal Show. Dot in particular had quite a reputation as a rider and when *Taihoa* was sold, there were a lot of old ribbons there.

Later on the family bought a thoroughbred called Ginny and her favourite occupation was to gallop home and put the rider over the front gate. I used to ride Quickstep in the Mt Wilson Sports' days from time to time, but I was a skinny little rat. Old Viv Kirk once said to me: 'You'd make a good pull through for a double barrel shot gun'.

### *Helen Naylor (Morley), Irvineholme*

Horses were always part of our lives—a very happy part of our lives. The first pony we children were given was Don and he was walked to Mt Irvine from Bilpin by Dad (but we never actually called him Dad, we always called him 'father'). Anyway, father and my brother Fred walked this grey pony home from Bilpin and my sister Cath and I went to the ramparts to watch them come back. That would have been around 1933 or so, when I was about nine (I was born in 1924). When Don came, the Knight Browns already had a pony and the Scriveners had horses. It used to be very social on the mountain and many people kept a few horses. There were a few work horses at *Irvineholme*, but we only ever had one horse at a time for riding. After Don we had a pony called Beauty, and finally Gyp. Beauty, well she was a rogue! Whenever you got on, she'd rear up. I didn't have a saddle for her, but father made me keep getting back on until she stopped bucking.

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We mainly rode around the mountain and I rode a lot with Bill Scrivener to Zircon Creek to collect zircons. As a teenage girl, I would ride Gyp into Mt Wilson to play tennis. There were tennis courts on Silva Plana and we'd play with some of the Mt Wilson people. I also often rode up to *Carisbrook* for dinner with the Smarts, then home again. We never went to shows, but Dorothy Scrivener did on her



Cath (Morley) Kerridge holding Don with cousin Isabel and sister Helen (Morley) Naylor riding c. 1928

horse, Bess, which was a terrific horse. Dot was much older than me, and it was wonderful to watch her ride.

Cath and I did take part in the Silva Plana games on New Year's Day. The horses were never shod in those days and the road to Mt Wilson wasn't good—there were sharp rocks and even blue metal on some parts of

the road. No-one wanted to ride in because the horses would plod all the way then bolt home. It was always a toss-up between Cath and me as to who had to ride the horse in. Being the younger sister, I usually lost. I'd leave early in the morning to rest Gyp before taking part in flag, bending and potato races on horseback. A popular event (that didn't involve horses) was also the 'husband calling', whereby wives had to pretend to call their husbands to lunch—I think usually with a loud cooee.

Anyway, from Mt Irvine, the Smarts would ride Dan in; the two Scrivener horses, Bess and Quickstep, always went in; and some years the Knight Browns would take a pony in too. It was quite competitive with many good



Helen Naylor (Morley) on Quickstep 1949

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riders from Mt Wilson, mainly from the Gunn and Kirk families.

One year I won the flag race on Dan and Mrs Smart presented me with a ribbon and a rope headstall, which I still have. Silva Plana sports day stopped during the war and then after the war there were not enough young people to get it going again.

One particularly memorable ride was on 4 August 1949 when Ron and I rode from *Irvineholme* into Mt Wilson to pick up a copy of our engagement notice in the Sydney Morning Herald. Ron was riding Gyp and I rode Quickstep. We would have taken the old short cut to Mt Wilson through the bush, near Long Saddle [the flat stretch of road between Touri and Lindfield Park]. There was a bit of swamp along the way and I remember Quickstep tried to roll with me, the rogue, but I managed to keep him up... just.

From a very young age, I also helped father with the draft horses—Polly, Sam and Prinny—hitching them to the slide then attaching the dray. At that time, *Irvineholme* was an apple orchard with five acres of trees. Helping father with the working horses was part of growing up. He had a single disc plough which we still have.

The last horse at *Irvineholme* was Gyp and he died in the 1950s. But I'm very proud that 22 years ago I rode across Bowens Creek with my daughter-in-law, Shane, all the way to Bilpin. [An accomplished horsewoman, Shane had the honour of riding her Australian Stock Horse in the famed opening ceremony of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.] The last time I'd ridden Bowens Creek would have been in the 1940s with Dot Scrivener. Riding it again in my 60s was not a bad effort!

### *Florence Smart, Carisbrook*

The Smart family first came to *Carisbrook* at Mt Irvine in 1939. I was only two, and visited just a few times while my father, older brothers Bill and Ron and colleagues from our Sydney nurseries cleared the land and



Bill Smart on Danny Boy Silva Plana 1940s

grew the first crops of vegetables, which were shipped off to 'feed the army'. Like so many other young people I had been smitten with horse fever and remember the thrill and excitement of being hoisted up to perch atop Polly, a placid and massive Clydesdale, loaned to us by Copeland Scrivener and driven by a

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then teenage Bill walking behind a single furrow plough or guiding the harrows over the newly cleared land.

In 1945 our whole family of nine moved into the two roomed 'hut'—a wonderful corrugated iron structure recycled from the Kur-Ring-Gai National Park and still standing intact and cared for by the present owners. By now we had acquired Danny Boy, a compliant and clever chestnut gelding who was to be the love of my life for my next seven years at *Carisbrook*. I suppose my father taught me a few basics about getting the bridle and saddle together with the horse, but it was Dan who patiently let me learn to ride. We probably mainly went where he chose, as I skipped correspondence lessons to ride every day.

We had many adventures together: fetching the mail that was delivered to the bottom of Danes Way three times a week was a favourite routine, and not always straightforward. Neighbours might leave things for my father in the mailbox: once there was a rather large carpet snake in a hessian sack, destined for a new home in our hayshed. As soon as Danny Boy got an inkling of what was in that sack I had quite a time getting the mailbag, the snake and myself up onto his back. I balanced the mailbag in front, the sack over my shoulder and we had a quick trip home up Danes Way as Dan decided the sooner he got us there the better.

By the late 1940s one horse was not enough for our family. My brothers Bill and Dick travelled down to the Colo region where they each chose a mare and rode them home along the Comleroy Road, Bells Line and across the Bowens Creek Road. There was great excitement when these young lads arrived home, but some apprehension also.

Did they choose well?

Bill's very tall bay was easy to manage, but people speculated that she may have been a pacer in her early life. She seemed to go like the wind but resisted breaking into a canter! Not too comfortable for the rider. Dick named his dark grey mare Merrylegs after that much loved pony in *Black Beauty*. She behaved well for a few weeks, but then one day in front of the house she made one corkscrew movement and left Dick, saddle and bridle all on Danes Way as she trotted off on her own.

When the paddocks were bare in a dry winter, the horses were turned out to roam around the mountain in a group. I loved them all, and always watched for them to come by our gate on their constant search for grass. Next to Dan my favourite was Rollo Clarke's bay mare Yanne, and her black daughter Shadow. There was Nell Knight Brown's white pony Bobby and the Morley's Gyp. My father had a great affinity with animals. He had taught Dan to count out his age and, perhaps a more useful trait, to open the chain and bolt fastenings that were common on farm gates. Dan did not endear himself to the neighbours when he let himself and his companions into whoever paddock had the most grass. We would get phone calls...

The horses were shared among local families. Whoever had friends staying who wanted to ride would borrow Dan, Gyp, Bobby, Yanne or whoever they needed. While *Carisbrook* was being built my brother Dick rode Rollo Clarke's Shadow every day to Mt Wilson and all the way down to Sid and Albert Kirk's mill off Wynne's Rocks Road to help as the local timber was being milled for the frame and weatherboards used for *Carisbrook*. And Dan was a favourite with everyone at the annual New Year's Day sports gathering at Silva Plana. I particularly envied Helen as she got to ride him sometimes for the bending and flag races.

Dear Dan—I hated being parted from him when I left for high school and later to work in Sydney. I think I know where he died, but won't say as there is a lovely house and garden there now.

I might ask the owner if he ever knew.

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*Elly & Alan Gunn, Willowbank*



Alan Gunn age 16 standing on Duster with Molly (Duster's mother) in the background. Molly was used for riding and pulling the plough when Jack and Alan Gunn grew potatoes.

*Alan:* The early working horses were the truly great horses in my opinion and, when I was a child, there were many working horses. There was Prince at Wynstay—a big part draft horse. Colonel Wynne always had him shod, and he'd go into harness and do whatever needed to be done around the place. I used him in a pasture harrow. My father Jack had Molly, Bonnie and



Jack Gunn on Donkey, Amy Reid (Gunn) on Cecil Kirk's Cloudy and Tom Kirk on Danny Boy, Silva Plana, late 1930s

Sally for many years and they were used to pulling the reversible disc plough as well as slides, drays and the tumble scoop. We'd harness the horses in pairs and also sometimes 'in line' [one behind the other] if you were pulling logs out of the bush.

The Valders always had a big horse called Darkie, and a little horse. Darkie was used alongside another sizeable horse to pull the spray cart—spraying apples—while the little horse was mainly for pulling the sulky. I remember the Sloans had a horse called Blossom, and Cecil Kirk had a big thick-set farm horse called Smiley.

Sally and Bonnie also pulled timber [taken from private properties around Mt Wilson], which was used to build the Lithgow mine shafts. Most of the timber we carted away was owned by Mr Wynne. A lot of people thought bullocks were superior for that kind of work in the bush because horses were too timid—if trees cracked or made a noise, the horses got upset. Of our

three, if I had to grade them, I'd say Sally was the best—she was much more capable of handling any situation that arose.

In those days, danger was a huge thing. You didn't want to put yourself or an animal at risk because help was a long, long way away. A horse like Sally was reliable. She wouldn't get upset or become dangerous and hurt herself or the person handling her. We could drive and control her by voice command—you didn't even need the reins on her. Sally was definitely our most usable, versatile horse, but Bonnie was the most powerful, and Molly was the smallest of the three. You have to be careful to match horses when you work them in pairs because one might be a bit lazier than the other—and it will let the other horse do all the work.

*Elly*: I met Alan in 1966 and we married in 1967. It's a nice story. I had a lovely chestnut mare called Dixie. Dixie was bred in Lithgow, where I grew up, by a Mr Carter and my parents bought her for my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Years later, about the time Dixie had had a foal, I'd gone to work in Perth and my father rang one day to say two fellows from Mt Wilson—Alan Gunn and John Kirk—wanted to buy the foal. I wanted £30 and they were offering 29. I said: 'They're from Mt Wilson, they must be wealthy—tell them the price is £30'. But in the end I took the £29 and bought a portable transistor radio with it. So by the time we got married, Alan had managed to get the foal, Dixie, the portable radio and me. Not a bad effort for £29!

Alan and I moved to *Willowbank* at Mt Irvine and brought some horses with us. The Naylor's used Dixie a lot and the Dougans would often borrow our pony Paddy. The horses were just made to go around.



Elly Gunn on her mare Dixie in the late 1950s ready for a day out at the Lithgow Pony Club of which she was secretary

One horse everyone seemed to ride at some stage was Duster. She was just a knock-about mare, and she had a couple of good foals. She was out of a part draft mare called Molly by a pony stallion, bred by a Mr Rosewarne in Lithgow. I don't know if Duster was planned or if it was more a case of them not having good fences in those days!

Anyway, Alan's father Jack bought

Molly and Molly foaled Duster at Mt Wilson. [Duster was probably born sometime around the late 1940s to early 1950s and was put down aged well over 30 in the early 1980s.]

Duster had a couple of nice foals, including a lovely mare we called Duchess. Duchess later had a big pinto colt that was named Patch. Duster was sent to Narromine at one stage and when she came back she was in foal to a Welsh mountain pony stallion. That foal was a dappled grey horse we called Smokey, which our eldest son, Stewart, rode for years.

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Smokey was a real handful. He'd chew through anything he could get his mouth around. He was a big powerful horse and, in those days, we still went to pony club and gymkhanas. Paddy, who our younger son David rode, had come from someone in Lithgow and he was supposed to be a really naughty horse. He'd tossed off their little girl and she'd broken her arm and after that they called Paddy 'the outlaw'. Alan bought him for the Hutley's children, and when they had finished with him he went to the Pigotts for a while before Alan bought him back for Stewart and David to ride.

### *Alison Halliday (Ross), Shasta Lodge*

While from the earliest days there were always horses for working purposes, there were also horses just for fun. Horseback was the most wonderful way to explore the mountain and I could ride almost right round the mountain and only cross a couple of roads. Moving quietly along caused little disturbance or noise and I saw lyrebirds and snakes. There was also birdsong to listen to, and logs to be jumped.

My parents bought my older sister a small black pony with a white star. It was called Jingle. Jingle came from Bathurst, found by a family member who was a stock and station agent. My sister soon outgrew her and I took over.



Stewart Gunn on Smokey, Ashley Carruthers on Mingie, Fiona Carruthers on Tommy and David Gunn on Bobby

I was 'horse mad' from a very early age. Jingle was often cranky, impossible to catch and had a habit of ducking under very low branches. But she could also be 'bomb-proof' and apparently I used to try to get on her by walking up her hind legs using her tail as a rope! We have a family photo with all four of us on her back. Many people learnt to ride on her and she was always quiet with a new rider. My father used to trim her tough little feet (she was never shod) and she sometimes tried to kick him.

I was taught to ride by Tom Kirk's oldest child, Jill. She had a horse called Creamy, which was a cream colour with a black mane and tail, and then Thunder, a tall liver-brown horse who looked like a thoroughbred. She took me out

first with a leading rein, then by myself. I remember Sid Kirk, who was next door, had a black horse that he called Donkey, but it wasn't.

We came to the mountain every weekend and in the holidays, and Jill would often have the pony caught and tied to the gate for us. The horses gave us all a great deal of pleasure and freedom. My parents insisted on us being back by dark but otherwise we were free to roam the mountain. I often had friends up to ride with, and sometimes I met up with Kevin Gunn. He rode Duster, a large bay horse with an evil temper, or an older horse called Bonnie. We used old stock saddles and a simple snaffle bit. For Jingle we had a beautiful special saddle that had belonged to an elderly relative who had been a Colonel in the British army in India and had given us his saddle.

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I was lucky to be given a horse called Red due to his bright chestnut colour. He was about 15 hh and a sturdy fellow with a small star and scruffy mane. He too became part of the winter pack and sometimes ended up on the hills near Gowan Ross. Bill Smart did not mind him joining his cows and liked the look of Red. He was a marvellous horse—patient, and he never bucked, even when pulled out of a paddock in spring and ridden home with only a halter. Like all the animals, he grew a thick winter coat, which would peel off in the warmer weather to show this marvellous glinting red-gold colour.

Eventually the terraces at my parent's place had been taken over by a gladioli venture and were no longer suitable for grazing, so I used to cadge paddocks from people on the mountain during summer, and the Armitages at *Koonawarra* were especially kind. I think they rather liked having a horse in their paddock, and he did keep down the grass. A few years ago I went to see the late Cath Coliguiiri who lived at *Koonawarra* and got a real shock as there was another bright chestnut—her daughter's horse grazing. For a minute I was fourteen again.

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Those who knew Hugh Fraser were shocked and saddened to hear of his sudden and unexpected death on 30 December 2010. Hugh was a well known and highly respected conservation architect who maintained an association

with Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine throughout his professional life. Hugh's drawings of the Turkish Bath are on permanent display in the Museum. The happy photograph above is of Hugh and Christine Fraser in the summerhouse Hugh designed at Nooroo. His friend and colleague, heritage consultant Chris Betteridge, wrote this tribute for our newsletter.

### **Hugh Fraser and Mt Wilson**

Hugh Fraser fell in love with Mt Wilson when he and his fellow students Alexis Mack and Bruce James made measured drawings of many of the original historic houses for their architecture studies at the University of Sydney. By the time I met Hugh in 1978 he had become friendly with the owners of a number of the old estates and had already been commissioned to design sympathetic additions and alterations to Yengo for Peter and Anne Pigott and to Nooroo for the Valder family. Hugh's iconic summer house at Nooroo complemented the house and garden beautifully and was a feature in many books, magazines and calendars.

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My association with Mount Wilson goes back to the 1950s. Some of my earliest memories are of trips from our house at Blackheath with my parents in our old 1935 Ford V8 to visit my great uncle Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Reynolds and his wife Ethel who sometimes stayed at *Chimney Cottage*. I remember one particularly delightful afternoon visiting Miss Sloan at *Bebeah* and marvelling at the autumn colours of the old oak tree in her garden. My parents later made occasional sorties to Mt Wilson to obtain hard-to-get bulbs and alpine flowers from people such as Hugh Smart and Libby Raines. I believe that they knew Libby's parents from the time when her father was Headmaster of the King's School at Parramatta, where my father was a pharmacist for 40 years.

Hugh Fraser and I were both lucky enough to be appointed to the newly established Heritage and Conservation Branch of the NSW Planning and Environment Commission in the first half of 1978. Hugh was one of the Senior Architects in the branch and I was the Environmental and Landscape Specialist. These were exciting days—NSW finally had some tough legislation to protect its cultural heritage at a time when over-zealous developers threatened many of our most precious historic buildings and precincts. Hugh and I collaborated on many projects such as a series of seminars on the conservation of Federation houses and gardens which the Heritage Branch ran in the suburbs where the architectural style was being threatened by unsympathetic development. It was also a privilege for me to assist Hugh, in a small way, with his wonderful book *The Federation House - Australia's Own Style* published in 1986.

Around that time the beautiful landscape of Mount Wilson was coming under threat from new subdivisions along the sandstone ridges that extend out from the rich basalt core of the settlement. Some of the old estates were also changing hands, with the possibility of subdivision and unsympathetic developments. A new planning instrument for the Blue Mountains was still some years away, so the Heritage Council recommended a series of successive Interim Conservation Orders to protect Mt Wilson until new, permanent planning controls could be implemented. During this period Hugh Fraser and I considered many development applications for Mt Wilson, providing advice that we hoped would help to protect the outstanding natural and cultural values of this wonderful mountain retreat.

Thanks to Hugh's friendship with the Pigotts, members of the Heritage Branch had a number of memorable weekends at *Yengo* enjoying the house (including Hugh's additions) and garden and the wildlife refuge which Peter had established to conserve rare and endangered native animals, particularly the Parma Wallaby. On these wonderful weekends we fed the animals, went on bushwalks, rode bikes along leafy lanes and played tennis and croquet, being careful to avoid the spring bulbs peeping through the grass on the croquet court. We dined regally on these weekends at *Yengo*, with all of us contributing to memorable breakfasts, lunches, and dinners in the glorious setting and bracing mountain air. One particular dinner that stands out in my memory was a themed meal in which all the courses - entree, main and dessert - had to be green. We were way ahead of Master Chef! Those were the days!

Until very recently, Hugh and his lovely wife Christine continued their relationships with Mount Wilson and Mount Irvine, often staying with friends in this place that had become so important to them both. I am sure Hugh will be remembered very fondly, not only for his professional contribution to the conservation of Mount Wilson, but also as a friend to many who call it home or spend weekends or holidays in this special mountain place.

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### **Objectives of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine Historical Society Inc**

*Membership is open to all who accept and support these objectives.*

1. To make a substantial contribution to the account of Australian history by promoting the study of aspects of the Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine districts and their communities, especially in terms of their:
  - cultural history
  - exploration history
  - settlement history
  - Aboriginal history
  - industrial history including agriculture, horticulture, the timber industry, mining and tourism.
2. To conserve, preserve and protect the heritage and heritage values of Mt Wilson and Mt Irvine.
3. To set up and maintain a museum in the Turkish Bath building to house the collection and to serve as a centre for its public display and for the Society's educational programs and research.
4. To maintain close links with other societies and associations in the local communities and beyond by way of meetings, functions, newsletters and occasional historical papers.
5. To lend support to like-minded societies or associations, where possible.

**For all information and bookings contact Mary Reynolds**  
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### **A Word from the Editor**

I've just returned to my desk after being given the opportunity of going on a six day organised hike within the Tarkine region of northwest Tasmania. This 447,000 hectare wilderness, of which almost half is old growth forest, contains the largest tract of temperate rainforest in the southern hemisphere. Over 60 rare, threatened and endangered species of birds and animals inhabit the Tarkine. Our small group of hikers was led through glades of towering soft tree ferns, camped downstream from thundering waterfalls, touched ancient bracket fungus and hugged enormous myrtles which have been growing towards the sky since well before colonial settlement.

In one week I learnt more from my guides about the evolutionary, botanical and Aboriginal history of this beautiful state than I have in the three years I've lived here. And I emerged on day six from the rainforest in tears. Not just because I was leaving a place I'd spent a week connecting with, but because I had learnt while I was there that only around 5% of the Tarkine is National Park. The other 95% is, despite being of World Heritage significance, classified as Reserve and co-managed by Forestry and Tourism. Which means the area is still being actively logged and mined. The fragility of its present state of existence broke my heart.

Groups such as the Tarkine National Coalition and tourism operator Tarkine Trails have both been working for years to have this area secured by government as a protected wilderness and they're slowly, slowly getting there. These groups are to the Tarkine what the Society is to Mt Wilson & Mt Irvine. Without the existence of such organisations and the ongoing work of individuals within them, history, in all its forms, would be lost.

– Elspeth Callender